Kashmiri Poetry:
A Source of Kasmir History (1846-1947)

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Abstract: *Poetry deals with the truth of the changing times while pure history is a record of the facts as understood and interpreted by individual historians. Aristotle, therefore, considered poetry superior to all other varieties of knowledge, including history. The representative nature of poetry has been recognised as its chief characteristic since the times of the Greeks who called it mimesis. Since Kashmir history is an endless record of subjugation, denial of rights, and repression, Kashmiri poetry has remained steeped in mystic moorings of the soul for finding freedom from worldly life that was not deemed worth living. It was under the period under review that signs of the return to being in the world rather than being out of the world are seen. A brief excursus in the poetry of the period treats it as a source of history though it was written not to record the facts, but to attenuate the miseries of the people.*

The undeniable criterion of genuine poetry is its *aesthetic representation of the time of its occurrence*; poetry that does not conform to this universal standard gets buried in oblivion. Even a cursory overview of the poetry of the past, irrespective of the languages and cultures, reveals that good poetry focalizes the life seen and lived through by the poets. Although poetry can never be a substitute of history, even if it is the national epic, historical element or historicity in it makes it worthy of notice and appreciation in all times. The historical content usually comes in it of its own when the poet concretises his experience of being amidst his 'here and now', or as a result of poet's conscious effort to place experience in a historical setting. The very use of natural common speech brings in the tangible cultural ambience in which the poet exercises his/her art of using language.

The Kashmiri language, the language of a people insulated from the rest of the world by mountains, sustained the continuity of moral, spiritual, and aesthetic values of its speakers throughout the centuries. The cataclysmic changes

in the social and political life of the people hardly had any impact at the deeper level because none of the changes were the consequence of the people's own strife; these changes were rather imposed by the non-native dynamics of power. As a result of this distance between the life actually lived and the determining forces, Kashmiri poetry like all other aspects of social behaviour of the people, continued to reproduce what was dearest to them; it gave variegated expression to the unalterable building blocks. The novelty of expression, however, is not to be mistaken for the originality of experience. The homeostasis of the distinct ethos makes it extremely difficult to find the objective social representation in the bulk of Kashmiri poetry that is predominantly mystic, esoteric, and lyrical, yet it is one of the most reliable sources of Kashmir history.

The period of Kashmir history from 1846 to 1947, is one of the most significant periods in the history of the people, both in terms of social and political affairs, and literature, in the Kashmiri language. The historical developments in the period augmented new preferences in selecting subject matter for writing and using common speech in creative writings. For centuries until then, Kashmiri literature had been predominantly either esoteric and mystic in import, or steeped in myths and legends borrowed from other nations. Writing about contemporary life and native legends and myths was therefore a remarkable development. Uniqueness of the literature of the period lies in the identification of the presence of the self of the author vis-a-vis the time of his/her occurrence. Unlike the tradition, new sensibility was marked by the primacy of sensations, realisation of *truth* as historical development, and immediacy of the language actually used in the time.

There are some noteworthy reasons that made the element of social reference an essential part of the creative literature, the reasons lie in various historical developments in the life of the people. In first place, the extraordinary significance of the period lies in the emergence of a new political territory, called the *Jammu and Kashmir State*. This development of far-reaching consequences was a result of the treaty, called

Amritsar Treaty. Under this treaty, the British Government sold the whole North-western Himalayan region to Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu for a paltry amount of seventy-five lakh rupees. The treaty was concluded by Frederick Currie and Henry Montgomery Lawrence on the side of the British Government and Maharaja Gulab Singh. The very first article of the Treaty reads as follows:[1]

> The British Government transfers and makes over, forever, in independent possession, to Maharaja Gulab Singh and the heirs, male of his body all the hilly or mountainous country, with its dependencies, situated to the eastward of the river Indus and westward of the river Ravi, including Chamba and excluding Lahore, being the part of the territory ceded to the British Government by the Lahore State, according to the provisions of Article 4 of the Treaty of Lahore, dated 9 March, 1846.

The state that emerged as a geo-political entity comprised an agglomeration of several disparate entities like Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Baltistan, Kohistan, Kafristan, Iskerdu, Ponch, Rajouri, Kishtawar, Badharwah and many other adjacent valleys that hardly shared anything in terms of language, religion, culture, ethnicity and modes of livelihood. Secondly, a semblance of nationhood under the illusion of a sovereign local ruler emerged after many centuries of subjugation to non-native governments like the Greeks, Karkotas, Utpalas, Shahmiris, Chaks, Mughals, Afghans, and the Sikhs. Thirdly, Kashmiri's direct contact with the British ushered in a new era of education, health, housing, and commerce. In view of the tangible transformation in all spheres of life, it is not without reason to recognise this period as the beginning of 'Modern Kashmir'.

The historical development, however, received sharp criticism from the very beginning, both from the British scholars and administrators and the local intellectuals. Sir

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[1] Treaty of 1846, quoted by Sufi, G.M.D. Sufi, *Kashir: Being a History of Kashmir*, Lohore: 1948, rpt. Srinagar: Ali Mohammad and Sons, 2018, Vol. II, p. 444.

E.G. Golvin, Resident in Kashmir, for instance, wrote in his book, *Brief history of Kashmir:*[2]

> But Lord Hardinge, Governor-General, considered the occupation of the whole of this territory inadvisable as it would largely increase the extent of our frontier and the military establishment for guarding it. The districts in question, with the exception of the comparatively small Valley of Kashmir, were for the most part unproductive and unlikely to pay the cost of occupation and management. On the other hand, the ceded tract comprising the whole of the hereditary possession of Gulab Singh, who being unnaturally eager to obtain an indefeasible title to them, came forward and offered to pay the war indemnity if constituted independent ruler of Jammu and Kashmir. It was recognized that the transfer of these two provinces to Gulab Singh would materially weaken the Sikh power, secure the war indemnity and form a pleasing recompense to Gulab Singh whom the British wished to reward for his conduct and services.

After Ghulab Singh's death in 1857, the British continued their support to his son Ranbir Singh, but much warily as they sensed an element of doubt in his designs. They did not approve of his sending troops across the Karakoram or his plans to establish commercial relations with the Central Asian States. The British had their own designs of politico-economic penetration into the region, and Kashmir was deemed to be of vital importance in realizing the designs. The British Government used the Maharaja in crushing rebellions in Giligit, Chitral and other north-western mountainous regions, and, with his help, they were able to make the King of Chitral accept the suzerainty of the Maharaja. Thus, they succeeded in stopping the Tsarist Russia from occupying the whole of Central Asia.

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[2] E. G. Golvin, *Brief History of Kashmir, The Valley of Kashmir,* London, 1973, p. 131.

A number of European missionaries and travellers showed concern and compassion for the sufferings of the Kashmiri people and desired to alleviate their depravity and the sense of humiliation for having been 'sold' to an alien king. Arthur Brinckman and Robert Thorp vehemently censured the British Government for signing the Treaty of Amritsar. Arthur Brinckman, a missionary, who visited the Valley, wrote in the preface of his pamphlet, *The Wrongs of Kashmir*:[3]

> The Rajah, poor man, is responsible, next to us, for all the misrule of Cashmere. Ten years have proved him utterly unfit to govern the country.

In his fifty-one assertions and remarks in support of his proposal of establishing a buffer state, Brinckman wrote that the British should not have sent their troops across Kashmir to defend the Raja from his enemies and the expansionist Tsarist Russia: if the treaty, on the other hand, was signed to make the Raja fight Russia, then it would have been better for the British to do so by their own forces. He thought that Russia could easily "win over the Rajah or sweep him away, as the great hindrance to commerce in central Asia is the Cashmere Government". Citing the example of Afghanistan under Shah Shooja as an ally of the British Government, he pleaded that a state with full independence could work as a better buffer against the invading force of Russia.

Robert Thorpe gave a detailed account of the oppression of the people by the government of the Maharaja. He explained how the toiling masses were exploited by the state through various ruthless official agents like the *Tehsildars*, the *Thanedars,* the *Kardars*, the *Patwarees*, the *Shugdars,* the *Sur-Gowls*, the *Taraguhdars,* the *Zurkars* and the *Doombs*. All these officials, in a hierarchical system, left the peasants in a famished condition bereft of livelihood and eventually of human grace. The plight of shawl-weavers and other artisans in the city was in no way little than that of the woeful peasants.

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[3] Arthur Brinckman, *The Wrongs of Kashmir*: London, rpt. New Delhi: 1986, p. 78.

The most ugly and despicable feature of the coercive administrative system was the custom of forced labour *begar* or corvée which made the peasantry pay to their masters either in terms of labour or in the form of illegal exactions. The peasants trudged on the perilous paths over "precipitous slopes of rock, upon whose edge sits the avalanche waiting for his prey". Robert Thorpe wrote about the men engaged in corvee:[4]

> Powerful and hardy are the sons of Cashmir: patiently they toil onwards through the drifting snow, in the name of Allah and Prophet! Many encourage each other with words of hope; it may be that they will yet reach the other side in safety. Alas, no! From two or three the strength is already departing and the keen wind is paralyzing the sinews.

Robert Thorpe, because of his scathing criticism, became an eyesore for the Dogras and their lackeys, and after much harassment, he was murdered near Dalgate on 22 November, 1868. Many other British intellectuals persuaded the Government to abolish the system of corvee. Sir Walter Lawrence wrote in his monumental work, *The Valley of Kashmir*:[5]

> The power enjoyed by the officials under the system *mujwaza*, in virtue of which they could deprive a village of the year's food stocks, was great, but not as great as the power wielded by them in the levy of *begar* or forced labour.

The age-old system of forced labour assumed horrendous proportion when the Maharajas under the directions of the British stationed an army garrision at Gilgit in order to guard aganist any invasion from Russia. Lawrence wrote:[6]

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4 Robert Thorpe, *Kashmir Misgovernment*, Calcutta, 1868, p. 57.

5 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir,* London, Oxford University Press, 1895, p. 411.

6 Ibid., p. 413.

> Gilgit to the Kashmiri is a constant terror, and when it was rumoured that transport was wanted to convey the baggage of the troops going to or coming from Gilgit, there was a general stampede among the villagers. I have seen whole villages bivouacking on the mountains when the agents for the collection of transport arrived in their tehsil, and I have seen human punishment dealt out to men who demurred to leaving their homes for two or three months with the prospect of death from cold or starvation.

The British Governmenrt established a fulfiledged Residency in Kashmir in 1885 when Rabir Singh died. It strengthened the Britsh intervention in Kashmir affairs further. The purpose of the Residency was not only to assist and supervise administrative reforms in Jammu and Kashmir, but also to keep constant watch over the events beyond the North-Western frontiers of Kashmir. The first Resident, Sir Oliver St. John, was appointed in 1885, and he was succeeded by C. Plowden in 1888. During the reign of Pratap Singh, the Residency practically took the administration of the State in its own hands.

Several reformative measures were started for the welfare of the Kashmiris, who according to the Census of 1891 numbered just 143,253, spread over the whole of the Valley.[7] The decision to construct the roads was a significant development that augmented the influx of European visitors. Most of these visitors were interested mainly in having pleasure trips or expeditions, but many of them devoted their time and competence in various humanitarian and missionary activities, and in studying various aspects of the language, culture, folklore and the life of the people. In order to alleviate the suffering of the people, the Government under the pressure of Residency also undertook land-settlement under the supervision of Sir Walter Lawrence (ICS) and the landless peasants got some amount of livelihood. The Europeans also established Mission hospitals, schools, and colleges. The decision of making State-Subject mandatory for appointments in the state-run departments was also taken

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7 Ibid., pp. 224-226.

and implemented later in 1927. Construction of various roads like, Jehlum Valley Cart Road, Srinagar-Gilgit Road and Banihal Cart Road was made one of the top priorities of the Government. The missionaries and intellectuals in various spheres of knowledge like folklore, languages, religion, geography, fauna and flora worked fervently to collect and preserve old manuscripts and then compiled, transliterated, translated and published them under the auspices of the Royal Asiatic Society. Had not the manuscripts lying in precarious condition been retrieved and preserved by the British, the cultural heritage of Kashmiri would have perished for all times to come.

The hectic intellectual activity inspired the native religious leaders, preachers, and poets to write about their own faith; the underlying motive of this new interest was to counter the popularity of the Christianity among the masses. The folk-artists like wandering story-tellers, minstrels, called 'Sha'ir',[8] Bandhs of folk-theatre, and folk musicians appeared and, encouraged by the British researchers, revived the dying arts of Kashmir. The people, having a semblance of well-being, began reviving their age-old traditions, festivals, going to fetes, worshipping at the shrines, and revelling on all happy days, like births and marriages.

The noticeable changes in society and ethos of Kashmir could not keep indigenous literature unaffected; many such works eventually appeared in the language as had no precedence. It is, therefore, worthwhile to rely on such creative works, mainly in poetry, to understand the truth of the era. Literature of the time, though not much in quantity, informs us about the social and political condition of the period.

A notable folk poet of the time was Sabir Tilwony, father of Hatim Tilwony, the famous story-teller who resided at Panzal, in Lar Parganah. One of his poems, titled *Yarqand anoan zeinaan,* sings of the valour and resolve of the labourers who were enthused to participate in the construction of Gilgit Road. Sir Aurel Stein, who took temporary lodging at an idyllic place on the Harmukh

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8 Ibid., p. 256.

Mountain at the summit of Mahand Marg while he translated Kalhana's *Rajatarangani* there, recorded Sabir Tilwoony's poem '*Yaarqand anoan zieynaan*' from his son Hatim Tilwoony. George Grierson wrote about the poem of Sabir Tilwoony:[9]

> The Mission of Sir Douglas Forsyth across the Hindukush to Kashgar took place in 1873-1874. It passed through Kashmir, where people were collected to serve the camp. Saabir, the author of this poem, describes the events attending the impressments of these camp followers. He evidently believes that it was a military expedition to conquer Yarqand.

Here are a few stanzas of the poem to show how the slaves could partake in ecstasy of expeditions of their master: the *begar* (corvee) is depicted as a valorous act in which every wretch is seen honoured to have got the chance:[10]

Yiy mya dyutyay tiy gatshti boazaan
Yarqand anoan zenaan
Gwa Dany dop malkanyi kus kari yohay kaa
Forsyth chhu zoaravaar
Raazi byehyi Yarqandi baaj gatshi taaraan
Yarqand anoan zenaan

Londni pya Thi yarqand yimav kor tai
mashihur haa tswapaery gay
gwa Dany Swani Margi chhaavan poshi maedaan
yarqand anon zienaan

hukma maharaja Buttanis bronth draav
Balti tum aage jaav
peechhe java Kashmir naale chaalaan
yarqand anon zienaan

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9 George Grierson, in Stein, Aurel London: 1919, *Hatim's Tales*. Rept. Srinagar: Gulshan Books, *Kashmiri Stories and Songs*. Introduction by Shafi Shauq, p. 79.

10 Ibid., p. 78.

Rasat sai tsopor kerhai tarfan
Gwa Di log Maraz pargan
tim vadaan aesy kot legy gaerzaan
yarqand anon zienaan
Ba ra-i khumb khaas zanaanan chhi sombraan
zyun ti gaasi sombraavaan
aji aasi pyaaval kennh aasi du jaan
yarqand anon zienaan

Sabir Tilwanyi taam yutuy van
yaamat khabar boozan
taany aav saaheb baa soruy saamaan
yarqand anon zienaan

Translation

Listen what I say, to Yarqand we advance to conquer it.
The Queen inquired who the fit person was.
Forsyth possessed the strength and acumen;
The king shall occupy the throne of Yarqand
to get wealth as taxes from the place.
Let's advance to conquer Yarqand.

From London to Yarqand they were resolved
to travel; much famous they were;
the first stop was at Sona Marg,
where they stopped to enjoy flower-meadows

Let's advance to conquer Yarqand.
The Maharajas order was sent in advance to Tibet,
'O men from Baltistan, proceed as harbingers,
And you O Kashmiri, seek the permission.

Let's advance to conquer Yarqand.
The order was broadcast in all directions,
Maraz area was the first to come forward;
They kept weeping for being in unknown terrains;
Let's advance to conquer Yarqand.
Women too were asked to join the expedition,
Directed to gather firewood and hey;
many bore their babies and many were pregnant;

Let's advance to conquer Yarqand.
O Sabir Tilwaanyi, say no more now,

> For this is the time to hear the latest news;
> the Lord along with his retinue is arriving;
> Let's advance to conquer Yarqand.

The unrelenting tyranny, as Sabirr's poem reveals, resulted in an unquestioned surrender, even worship of tyranny, among the gullible plebs. There are reflections of the abject surrender, akin to Stockholm syndrome, in various songs of the roaming bards, called *ladishah*. They carrying a harp in their hands crooned songs of woe in a diction and style that worked a kind of comic catharsis.

Maqbool Shah Kralawari's *mathnavi gries naamah* (Of the Peasantry, 1852), in spite of its derogatory and abusive language, is a literary classic in which we, contrary to the leitmotif of the poet, get a lot of information about the predicament of the agricultural workers in the feudal system. Maqbool used all the arsenal of language like lampoon, burlesque, slander, and ridicule, to the extent of abuse and slang, to denounce the miserable agriculture labourers who were reduced to such helplessness as made them indifferent to religious and ritual obligations and practices that were made complicated by the *peers* and *mullahs*. Several anecdotes woven into the text of the long poem, reveal a lot about the exploiting sections of society like *sazavul* (revenue collector), *shiqdar* (crop watcher), *patwari* (land surveyer), *tahsildar* (the chief officer of a *tehsil*), *zaildaar* (the manager of the agricultural land), *fotedar* (in charge of treasury) and *thanedaar* (head of a police station). We come to know, of course indirectly, how even the clergy used different shenanigans to loot the ignorant masses and thus added to their misery. A reader of today easily understands how the clergy of the time enjoyed freedom to keep the rustic yokels submerged in the mire of superstition so that they could not reason, argue and understand how all forms of social injustice were invented by the crafty men, not preordained for them. They did not understand how the means of tyranny were institutionalised by the vested interests, including the preachers. Here is an excerpt to show how Maqbool Shah

denounces the peasants for dithering to render service to their priests:[11]

> One is here who is unfailing in religion,
> the other is irked to hear even a salaam.
> Irreligious are the ignorant rural folks
> the rustics' hearts are frozen like ice.
> Neither fear of God they know, nor respect for faith,
> completely ignorant they are about the tenets of Islam.
> They are devoid of God's fear and human modesty,
> Bearing no scruples in their eyes, they are brutes.
> Besmirched indeed are the rustic peasants,
> doing them any good is not advised.
> Indeed they deserve harrowing even from the heaven,
> Bear-footed they are, beaten and clobbered on their heads.
> Expecting some favour from even a stranger,
> a peasant readily offers him his daughter, sister or his spouse.

Maqbool's enunciated purpose of writing this venomous satire is contrary to the result as the *pirs* and other religious leaders, masquerading as redeemers are exposed as the cogs in the scheme of tyranny. Here is how the helplessness of the wretched rustics is revealed when a peasant and his family members are terrified to see the revenue collector at the door of their thatched mud-house:[12]

> When the Sazavul appears, they come out to greet him,
> They massage him and make him sit cosily in the house.
> With heads bowed and hands folded all keep standing,
> "Come down from your horse, sir, sit a while inside.
> Our daughters and sons are at your service,
> We knew that you the Pundit would come to visit us.
> Much trouble you have taken, let's take your shoes off,
> We shall massage your soles
> with butter to take the heat out."
>
> Silently their men folk sneak out with some pretext
> like guarding their rice field or the threshing ground.

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[11] Maqbool Shah Kralawari, (1852), *Gries Naamah*, ed. Mohammad Yousuf Teng, Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.

[12] Ibid.

Early in the morning they return to pay him obeisance,
One by one all supplicate to seek his mercy.
They offer him all the well-fed chicken of their house,
They place his shoes on their naked heads.
Having accepted all yet he gives them thrashing,
thorough beating rids their rags of the dust.
"We never mind your beating, let blight strike us if we lie.
Let your beating continue, we pray to God.
Your beating is our food, be not irked,
We all consider your strikes by shoes our honour".

Maqbool Shah knew quite intimately the wretchedness and helplessness of the rustics of his time, yet he, like a typical Pir, sought homage and tributes from them. The *pirs* thought that they were preordained to prosper on the labour of the superstitious folks:[13]

When a Pir they sight from a distance,
if outdoors, they run away to hide in their barn.
They silently ask their kids to peep out to find
if he is still there or left to some other direction.
With authority the Pir enters their compound,
The kids tell him that neither father nor mother is there.
"Father has left to get rice, mother gone to the forest,
father asked her to fetch a bundle firewood.
For six days we have been fasting, living on little flour,
Of hunger our father is about to breathe his last.
He prayed to God that the Pir visited the house soon,
Some used garment he might give him for he is all naked".

When Maqbool Shah's long malignant satire reached the masses, he was hated by the peasants and they eventually stopped paying him gifts and tribute like rice, poultry, sheep, and vegetable. The poet soon realised his mistake and begged for forgiveness. He wrote:[14]

A jinxed moment it was that I wrote the nonsense,

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[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

My reason failed me, later I realised my folly.
My time, alas, I wasted in a futile work,
Alas, Satan led me astray and guided me to write.
O God, I pray, absolve me of my crime!
Show me the right path, have mercy on me.

In order to placate his ignorant rustic followers and continue his profession of priesthood, he wrote a very harsh satire on the people of his own vocation. The poem, in the form of a *mathnavi* again, is titled *Pir-naamah*. The poem reminds us of the Sheikh Noor-ud Din's satire on the parasitic clan:[15]

All, elite as well as low-born, are alike in disposition,
The leaders expected to guide are turned into robbers.
Ignorance and ill manners are rampant in society,
Recognition of good human beings is nowhere found.
One who is steadfast in following one's faith,
Is deemed a hypocrite who uses his devilry.

A Pier roaming in negligee after smoking hashish,
Is deemed a real sage, and is trusted by all.
And if he, per chance, has the art of crooning too,
all believe that he has attained the highest truth.
His phlegm is held in hands, his spitting is welcomed.
"Big calamities", they say, "he alone has stopped".

Maqbool Shah's two monumental long poems, called *naamaas* (narratives) are brilliant examples of harnessing the organic relationship of common speech and poetry in revealing the truth of the time.

Abdul Ahad Nadim (1838–1911), essentially revered for his devotional poetry, also wrote a castigating lyrical poem on the moral degeneration of the religious leaders of the time who, being indifferent to the pain and suffering of the subjugated masses, did not show any scruple in exploiting them further. He also lashed at them for their lasciviousness,

[15] Ibid.

arrogance, and showing no regard for what is right and honourable. The intensity of his slander can be felt in a stanza like this:[16]

> A strumpet faces the shortage of customers,
> arranges for a group- praying in the market;
> The depraved *mullas* run headlong to participate;
> This is what the infidels were once ashamed of.

The roaming bards, or minstrels of the time, recognised as a distinct class '*Shair*' by Walter Lawrence, composed many songs on people's miseries and misfortunes caused by heavy taxation imposed by the rulers; most of the poems of this nature that were part of people's oral literature, are now irretrievable lost. Lawrence wrote about this class of folk-entertainers:[17]

> It is good to give these poets a few rupees, for they are often miserably poor. Many whom I have met are unfortunately not quite sane, and one, a Musalman, who had formally been a tutor to a high official, was hopelessly given to drinking, and justified his propensity by quotations from the Persian poets. He reviled me in the strongest language when I declined to give him whiskey, and said that "iron age" of the Hindus had indeed arrived, and left my camp in tear.

One such *Shair* was Mir Ali Shah (Kaloosa, Bandipora) who authored three *mathnavis*: *Quisai Arapora, Qusa-i Aakhir Zamaan,* and *Tashukkur Namah Wali-e Kashmir*. The second one is very significant in terms of depicting the condition of Kashmiri people:[18]

> Our king lives in the city of Jammu,
> All his subjects are his cultivators.
> People are levied beyond limits,

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[16] Abdul Ahad Nadim, Shahar Aashoob in *Kulyati Abdul Ahad Nadim,* ed. Rashid Nazki. Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, p. 85.

[17] Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 256.

[18] Mir Ali Shah Khoyhami, *Qisa-i Aakhir Zamaan*, ed. Naji Munawar, in Pursaan, pp. 147-156.

The poor pay levy even on the leaves of turnip.
I cannot count how much we are looted,
What shall they say to God on the day of Judgement?
Even having accumulated all, they are not satiated,
They subjugate Kashmiris in many a manner.
The fear of the police they have instilled one and all,
Killings otherwise would have become a routine.
Many are involved in protracted criminal court cases,
People are hired to stand as false witness.
All are resolved to be engaged in day-today feuds,
People know only to file cases in the court.
The court is slow in deciding on the cases,
The files are studied as sacred text of Baba Nanak.
Ali Shah Mir has finally decided to narrate
How the End of World is near us, the ill fated.

Mir Ali Shah, among other things, mentions some positive development that took place in the time that is establishment of Dachigam sanctuary, advent of electricity, beginning of public water-supply and emergence of Kochhi Bagh as the favourite residential place of the rulers.

Wahab Parrey of Hajan (1846-1914), known for his prodigious epic and voluminous lyrical poetry, wrote about the ruthlessness of the rulers of the time. The following excerpt from his long poem *Darveshi* gives us a vivid picture of the injustice, ruthless taxation, and blatant exploitation of the masses.[19]

How many cruelties of the period shall I enumerate?
The dunderhead rulers unleash gloom in the land.
Artisans of all crafts are heavily levied,
The department of loot is the Revenue Department.
Carpenters, cobblers, vendors, vegetable sellers,
Butchers, bakers, tailors and the blacksmiths,
the people of all these vocations have to pay taxes.
How shall I count the tyrannies of the tyrants?
Every lion is followed by a horde of rapacious dogs.

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[19] Abdul Wahab Parrey, *Darveshi.* Srinagar: Ghulam Mohammad Noor Muhammad, Tajrani Kutub, 1943, p. 24.

There are many other long and short poems written in late decades of the nineteenth century that provide us with much valuable information. Lala Lakhiman of Chwalgam Kulgam, Bahar Shah of Hiypour Batagund (Shopian), Syed Mirak Shah Kashani (Shalimar), Aziz Bahrari (Bahrar), Abily Wony of Ratapora (Eidgah), Molvi Muhammad Noor-ud Din Qari (Wazapora) and Maulana Anwar Shopiani (1853-1940) are some of the poets who, in one way or the other, expressed the pent up resentment against injustice, tyranny, superstition, and exploitation.